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THE
INDISPENSABLE DUTY
OF A
CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE
To Our LAWFUL
S O V E R E I G N.

A

S E R M O N
PREACH'D AT
STONELEIGH,
JANUARY 30, 1745, on *Rom. xiii. 1.*

Most humbly Dedicated to the Right Hon.
THOMAS LORD LEIGH, Baron of Stoneleigh,
By WILLIAM DENHAM, A.M.
VICAR of STONELEIGH. *W*



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DEDICATION.

To the Right HONOURABLE
THOMAS LORD LEIGH,
BARON OF STONELEIGH.

My LORD,



Beg Leave to recommend to Your LORDSHIP's Patronage a Discourse (*imperfect as it is*) upon the Doctrine of Obedience: A Doctrine at all Times very proper to be inculcated by the Ministers of the Gospel, and, at this Juncture, more particularly to be countenanced by Persons of Distinction.

As no Gentleman, in the Communion of Our Church, can more sincerely wish to see Her fixed upon a lasting Foundation than Your LORDSHIP, so I flatter Myself that every Attempt to promote such Principles, as must support Her Establishment, will meet with Your Acceptance.

The Sentiments You entertain in Favour of our happy Constitution, and your inviolable Regard for the Liberty

berty of our Country, descended to You by Inheritance;
which, being founded in Reason, and confirmed by Ex-
perience, shone out to Advantage in the uniform Conduct
and Tenour of Your LORDSHIP's Life.

*That Your LORDSHIP may long continue a
Blessing to Your Country, is the hearty Prayer of,*

H My LORD, your LORDSHIP'S

Most obliged, humble Servant,

W. Denham.





THE
INDISPENSABLE DUTY
OF A
CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE
To Our LAWFUL
SOVEREIGN.

ROM. xiii. 1.

Let every Soul be subject unto the Higher Powers.



T is not long since those Doctrines, and Practices, which, in the purest Times of Christianity, were abhor'd as most heretical and prophane, nay, as damnable, were made amongst us the greatest Marks of Godliness, and Instances of the highest Attainments in Religion; and no Man was fit for the Society of these Saints, unless he had deny'd that Truth, and blasphem'd, and resisted that Power, in Obedience whereunto Christ and his Apostles lay'd down their Lives: Nay, in these very last Years, we have seen a publick Spirit of Phrenzy and Mischief in the World,

World, which hath made Mens Principles and Practices contend which should out-do the other in the Degree of Evil; and 'tis hard to say which hath been worst, Mens Actions or Opinions.

We are fallen into Times, wherein among some 'tis a Piece of Gallantry to defy God, and a Kind of Wit to be an Atheist, to scoff at all Religions, and despise the Messengers of God, as crafty and designing. Among others, it has been counted religious to be humourous and phantaftick ; and a Piece of Conscience to be turbulent and ungovernable, and to disobey every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake : Nor have Mens Practices come short of the Malignity of their Belief, but, if possible, have out-done it. Atheism hath not rested in the Judgment, but hath proceeded to all Enormities and Debauchery of Life : And we had never known the sad Solemnity of *this Day*, nor Cause to reflect upon the present Troubles, if Rebellion had stopt in Opinion. What is past we may lament, but cannot help ; what we may do, and what we ought, is to inform ourselves better of the Duty we owe to God and the King, and to endeavour the suppressing those Principles and Practices which gave Birth to the Plagues that not long since destroy'd our Kingdom's Peace, and would again now burn us up in hotter Flames than those : And if that fatal Fire, which so lately prey'd upon our Peace, and our Properties, our Religion, and Government, hath not yet convinced us of the Evil and Dangers of the Resistances of the higher Powers, yet there is another and greater that will ; one as certain, and more fatal, threaten'd by the Apostle in the Verse following the Text : *They that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation.*

In the two first Verses of the foregoing Chapter there is a general Exhortation to Obedience ; and at the third Verse there are particular Expressions of the general Doctrine in divers Cases, among which Obedience to Magistrates is a Principal, and is handled at large in this 13th Chapter.

It seems there was a great Necessity of preaching this Doctrine in St. *Paul's* Time ; for the Gnofticks (those ancient Puritans) interpreted the Liberty by Christ, to have freed them from Subjection to Government, by Reason whereof Christianity in general got a very ill Name in the World, and many cruel Persecutions were raised against it. The Christians, being many in Number, and the Emperors jealous of their Power, it was but Time to look about them, when once it was buzz'd in their Ears, that this spreading Religion allow'd not of Magistracy : It was this that brought the first Troubles upon the Church of God : It was by this Jealousy, blown into the Heads of the High-priests and Sanhedrim, of *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate*, that Christ himself (the Captain of our Salvation, who was made perfect thro' Sufferings) was accus'd, condemn'd, and executed on a Tree. By this the Apostles were halled before the Governors of Provinces, and forced to fly from one City to another : For this they endured Bonds and Imprisonments, and sundry Kinds of Death. It was owing to this groundless Notion that the Christians, for seven hundred Years together, endured the Rage of Heathen Emperors, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

Our Lord Christ was traduced as an Enemy to Cæsar, a Man refractory to the Roman Laws, and a Non-conformist to the Religion of his Country ; the Apostles were charged as Disturbers of the publick Peace, and turning the World up-side-down : *Acts xvii. 6.*

xvii. 6. The primitive Christians were accounted Enemies to the Commonwealth, disaffected and malevolent to the Empire: and 'twas hinted, and surmised, that the Christian Religion in itself had something in it offensive and dangerous to the civil Government, as appears by the several Edicts of Heathen Emperors against it, and the Apologies of *Tertullian*, *Justin Martyr*, and others for it: Neither was it thus only of old before the Empire was become Christian; but even since the Time of *Constantine the Great*, down to our Fathers Days; nay to our own, we shall find the Devil managing the same mischievous Pretence, carrying on the same Mystery of Iniquity, which began to work in the Time of Christ and his Apostles; from whence it doth appear, that the Puritans were the first Disturbers of the Church's Peace, and the Cause of all those Persecutions that were raised against her: For tho' there was no Ground for that Surmise, that the Christian Religion was an Enemy to Government; yet there was some for the Emperor's Jealousy; for the Gnosticks (those great Pretenders to Knowledge and Sanctity) by their factious Opinions and Practices, had given them just Cause to be thus severe, to force their Obedience and to keep them in Awe. For this Reason 'tis necessary, that in these our Times also, this Doctrine of Obedience to the higher Powers should be taught and inculcated, and the People punctually catechized and instructed therein; for we have the same Sort of mongrel Christians amongst us, the same Pretences and the same Practices. We have a Generation of Gnosticks, that under a settled Government, and Times of Peace, are very zealous and hot for the Truth, till they have set the Nation into a Flame; and when they have done so (like their Brethren of old) account it

it lawful and more safe to bow and offer Sacrifice to Idols, than to lose a Hair from their Heads, or singe the Hem of their Garment for the Truth's Sake.

In the Words read unto you, there are two Particulars observable :

First, The Persons that are to yield Subjection, that is, [Pasa Psuche] every Soul.

Secondly, To whom it is to be yielded, that is, the higher Powers, not Angels (as the Greek Word [Exousia] may be elsewhere rendered) but Magistrates, not Ecclesiastical but Civil, whose is the Sword, and to whom Tribute is due; because civil Magistracy (as St. Peter asserts) is an Ordinance of God, for the Punishment of Evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well. And 'tis here observable, that the Apostle doth not say to Emperors or Kings, &c. but Powers, naming the Thing, not the Person, the Office, not the Officer; because, tho' he that bears the Office may be wicked, and in Regard of his Person unworthy of Obedience, yet in Regard of his Office he is to be honoured and obeyed: For to him that is legally invested with the Power (be He what He will) our Obedience is always due: And this God does judicially, adapting the Kings he sets up to the Merits or Demerits of a People: *Because God loved Israel for ever, therefore he made Solomon King to do Judgment and Justice:* 1 Kings x. 9. And on the other Hand, *I gave thee a King in mine Anger, and took him away in my Wrath,* saith the Lord by the Mouth of his Prophet Hoseah: xiii. 11. Declaring his Displeasure in taking away a King, as well as his Anger in giving him, according to what the same Prophet speaks in another Place: Chap. x. 3. *We have no King because we fear'd not the Lord.* In a Word, Government is every Man's Security, and therefore Subjection is our Interest

terest as well as Duty; for Society cannot be manag'd without Laws, nor can Laws be put in Execution without Rulers; and therefore, where the Word of a King is (as the wise Man saith) there is Power; *And who may say unto him, What dost thou?* Eccles. viii. 4. Our Obedience is to be extended not only to the supreme Magistrate himself, but to all subordinate Governors sent and appointed by him, as St. Peter expounds the Words: *1 Ep[istle] ii. 13, 14.* The Greek Word [*Hupotassetho*] which is rendered, be subject, signifies an orderly Subjection, willing and chearful, accompanied with Reverence of Heart, respectful Language and Gesture, according to St. Paul's Rule, or rather Moses's, *Thou shalt not curse the Gods*, that is, Kings or Judges, as the Royal Profit expounds it: *Psalm lxxxii. 6. Nor speak Evil of the Ruler of my People:* Exod. xxii. 28. And that of Solomon, *Curse not the King, no not in thy Thought:* Eccles. x. 20. For the Prophet rightly observes, that they, which curse the King, at the same Time curse their God too: *Isaiah viii. 21.* And what is their Condition, *Behold Trouble, and Darkness, and Dimness of Anguish; and they shall be driven to Darkness everlasting:* Ver. 22. Every Soul. The Word Soul either signifies the whole Man by a *Synecdoche*, it being the nobler Part, or else the Manner of our Obedience, which must be *ex animo*: We must obey our King, as we worship our God, with all our Mind, with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength: And the Relative, every ~~part~~ annex'd, shews that there is no Exemption from this Obedience upon any Pretence whatsoever; but that every one who enjoys the Benefit of the Laws, under which he lives, must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience Sake.

Haying.

Having thus explained the Words of the Precept, *Let every Soul be subject, &c.* and given them their true and genuine Meaning, this Doctrine will naturally arise out of them, namely, *That all Men must yield Obedience and Subjection unto the Government under which they live.* This was the Doctrine of our Saviour under a Heathen Government, *Render unto Cæsar the Things that are Cæsar's:* This was his Practice, for he paid Tribute at the Expence of a Miracle. This you read at large in the 17th and 22d Chap. of St. Matt. And this he did lest he should offend, as he himself upon that Occasion declares. This also was the Doctrine of St. Paul, *Put them in Mind to be subject to Principalities and Powers, and to obey Magistrates:* Tit. iii. And St. Peter, *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake:* But to make the Case as clear as we can to every Capacity, and to convince every Man, that is not resolutely bent against Conviction, we will search the Scriptures throughout, to see if there be to be found the least Track or Footstep of any of God's Servants that ever resisted the least Iota in the Defence of it, or the least Instance or Encouragement for resisting of the higher Powers: Whether Moses, or the Prophets, Christ, or his Apostles, or that Cloud of Witnesses the noble Army of Martyrs, did ever allow, or connive at any such Doctrine or Practice; or whether they did not, without murmuring or reviling, pay a peaceable Submission to the Government under which they lived.

First, if we begin with *Moses* the Captain, and Teacher of God's People, we shall find him so far from countenancing Resistance of the higher Powers, that, notwithstanding the Hardness of *Pharaoh's Heart*, the Cruelty of the Bondage, the Weakness of the *Ægyptians*, by Reason of the Plagues, God had inflicted

licted, the Strength and Number of the *Israelites*, six hundred thousand, and three thousand five hundred and fifty fighting Men above twenty Years old, besides the Tribe of *Levi*, yet, altho' the People would sometime murmur against *Moses* he would never suffer them to mutiny or rebel against the most tyrannical Prince, or force their Way from that long and severe Captivity ; nay, he would not lead them into the Promised Land without *Pharaoh's* positive and express Consent to their Departure : This was his Carriage whilst subject to a Tyrant and an Heathen : And if we look into his Carriage towards those that, under *Corah*, conspired against him and *Aaron*, we shall see that altho' he often intreated God for them, yet he denounces a most severe and strange Judgment against them; which was accordingly inflicted by God himself : For, says he, *If these Men dye the common Death of all Men, or if they be visited after the Visitation of all Men, then the Lord hath not sent me : But if the Lord make a new Thing, and the Earth open her Mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the Pit, then ye shall understand that these Men have provoked the Lord :* And no sooner had he made an End of speaking but so it fell out ; the Ground clave asunder that was under them : *Numb. xvi.* And a strange and dismal Sight it was to see Men go alive into Hell. A Punishment sure sufficient to silence all the Arguments of Rebellion. I would advise every one to read over this Chapter at Leisure, and duly consider it : There is enough to convince any rational and sober Man of God's just Indignation against Schism and Rebellion. The Pretences for Faction were indeed as fair as ever were made Use of in this, or any other Part of the World, *namely*, that all the Congregation

gregation were holy every one of them. That *Moses* had usurpt Authority over them, and made them fine Promises of a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, and an Inheritance of Fields and Vineyards; yet now they were ready to perish in the Wilderness: Upon this the Conspiracy was very strong, no less than two hundred and fifty Princes, Men of Renown: But, behold God's Wrath! a Flame came from Heaven and devoured them every one; and the Plague destroyed fourteen thousand and seven hundred more.

Secondly, As for the Prophets: In *Dan.* iii. we find three of God's Children put to the Trial (even the fiery Trial) of this Doctrine. For there *Nebuchadnezzar*, King of *Babylon*, puts forth an Edict, enjoining all People, Languages, and Tongues, to commit Idolatry, Ver. 4, 5. Whereupon *Shadrach*, *Messach*, and *Abednego*, were cast into the fiery Furnace, because they would not worship the golden Image which he had set up.

In Chap. vi. we find *Darius* the *Persian* (a Man of the same Character with the other) by the Advice of his Counsel, signing a Decree, *That no Man, for thirty Days, should petition any God but himself*: Whereupon *Daniel* was thrown into the Lion's Den, only for praying to the God of *Israel*. Now let us consider their Behaviour; did they resist or mutiny? Did they raise Lies and Stories to defame the Government? Or, did they labour to divert and alienate Mens Affections from their Prince? A Stratagem frequently used by our Sectaries: Or, on the other Hand, did they ever pretend to absolve Subjects from their Allegiance? Or, by denouncing Threats, and Terrors, Bulls, and Excommunications, endeavour to discourage and frighten them out of their Obedience, which is a Popish Artifice, and has been practised all over Christendom, as well as in *England*. These

These had been taught other Doctrines by their Prophets: *Jeremy* had plainly told them, that *Zedekiah* had turned from the Lord God of *Israel* in rebelling against *Nebuchadnezzar*, tho' he was a Usurper over them: 2 *Cron.* xxxvi. 13. And exhorted them *To seek the Peace of the City, whither they were carried captive, and to pray unto the Lord for it*: *Jerm.* xxix. 7. And therefore we read, that the three Children in *Dan.* iii. refer themselves only to God for Deliverance, saying, *The God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us out of the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy Hands, O King*: Ver. 17. And *Daniel*, in the Midst of the Lion's Den, prays heartily for *Darius*, *O King, live for ever*: vi. 21. We find nothing here but a peaceable Submission and Dependance upon God. The Issue was, they were safely delivered, and the Honour of the God of *Israel* highly promoted; for there presently comes out a Proclamation from *Nebuchadnezzar*, *That no Man should speak amiss of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*: Another from *Darius*, *That all Men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel*.

Thirdly, In the next Place let us consider the Case of Christ and his Apostles, and see whether their Doctrine, and their Practice, their Speeches, and their Actions, be not agreeable to this Precept in my Text.

As for what concerns our Lord Christ, he paid Tribute at the Expence of a Miracle (as was before observed) he submitted to all the Powers that were over him, to the Sanhedrim, to *Herod*, to *Pontius Pilate*: He submitted himself to Death by an unjust Sentence, even to the bitter and accursed Death of the Cross: This was his Practice. As for his Doctrine, he taught Men (as I have already shewed) to *Render unto Cæsar the Things that were Cæsar's*. He acknowledged

ledged *Pontius Pilate's* Power to be from Above : *John* xix. 11. He rebuked *Peter* for smiting with the Sword, and told him that, *Those that take the Sword, shall perish by the Sword :* Matt. xxvi. 52. He taught his Disciples to pray for them that should persecute them ; and the utmost Permission that he gave them was this, *When ye are persecuted in one City flee into another :* x. 23. This was the Temper of the great Exemplar of our Religion : This was the Genius of his Doctrine and his Practice. And,

Fourthly, The Apostles who lived amongst his Enemies and theirs, and met with Severity enough to have fowred their Spirits, and exasperated their Pens to contrary Instructions, yet, as true Followers of their dear Lord and Master ; they faithfully transmit to us what they had learnt from him, *namely, That we should obey them that have the Rule over us :* Heb. xiii. 17. *To pray for Kings, and all that are in Authority.* And St. Peter hath especially told us, *That such as despise Dominion, and speak evil of Dignities are (in an especial Manner) reserved to Judgment :* 1 Ep. ii. 9, 10. And St. Paul, in the Verse following my Text, *That they shall receive Damnation.* This Doctrine they sealed with their Blood ; for, according to Ecclesiastical Tradition, every one of the Apostles suffered Martyrdom, except St. John, and he was banished. Now these Powers, to which they thus peaceably submitted, were for Idolatry, Tyranny, and Persecution, Monsters of Mankind.

Fifthly, The primitive Christians (those noble Spirits of the first Ages after Christ) began to be Martyrs, as soon as to be Christians, lived in the Fire, and went to Heaven, wrapt in those Flames, that had less Ardor than their Love. These, I say, amidst
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the greatest and fiercest Fires that Cruelty and Barbarism had kindled, paid the Tribute of a quiet and peaceable Subjection to their Murderers.

Now if it be objected, that all these submitted because they were not able to resist, I answer, that he that restrained the raging Flames, and stopt the Mouths of Lions, could have given his Servants Power to resist: That Christ could have prayed his Father to have given more than twelve Legions of Angels for his Relief: That the Apostles, who wrought Signs and Wonders, could have rescued themselves, had it not rather pleased the Great Ordainer of Powers, by their Subjection to ratify and establish the Doctrine of Obedience. But if this Answer, taken from the Principles of Christianity, be not satisfactory, we could easily reply to the Objection from the Practice of the primitive Christians, and give innumerable Instances wherein Christians, abounding in Number, were guarded with Arms, and sufficiently qualified to make Resistance: Yet we never read of any Attempts they made to throw off the Yoke, but have chosen rather, with the Expence of their Lives, to yield Obedience to Idolaters, persecuting them for their Religion.

Thus *Tertullian*, in the 37th Section of his *Apology* for the Christian Religion, tells the Emperor, that his Cities, Islands, Counsels, Armies, Regiments, and Companies, the Palace, the Senate, the Courts of Judicature, were all filled with Christians; and yet they submitted to Persecution. And there is a noted and illustrious Instance of passive Obedience in the *Thebean Legion*, which consisted of six thousand six hundred and sixty six Persons every Man Christian, whose tenth Man being executed for refusing to offer Sacrifice to Idols, they quietly submitted to the Cruelty.

Cruelty. And the same Punishment being ordered by the Emperor to be repeated, one of their chief Commanders (an excellent Example) stands up, and makes an eloquent Oration, periuading them to suffer it with the same Patience, because it was not with their Swords they could make their Way to the Kingdom of Heaven, but by another Kind of Warfare. Thus you see that the Doctrine of *Moses* and the Prophets, of Christ and his Apostles, and the Doctrine of the primitive Christians, is agreeable to this Precept in my Text.

Having thus proved the Position out of the old and new Testament, we will now see how far the Sectarian and Romish Doctrines are agreeable with this Precept of the Apostle, *Let every Soul be subject unto the higher Powers*: And in the first Place we may observe of the Doctrine of the Brownists, which takes away the Power of the supreme Magistrate in Causes Ecclesiastical; and thereupon they contemn and refuse to observe all Canons and Constitutions concerning Order in the Worship of God, which are not, *totidem verbis*, exprest and commanded in the Gospel. The Doctrine of the Donatists goes yet farther, and wholly takes away the Power of the civil Magistrate in all Causes, Things, and Persons whatsoever, expounding the Words of my Text only of Ecclesiastical Governors. The Anabaptists and Libertines exceed these, wholly denying the Use of Magistracy (whether it be Civil or Ecclesiastical) to be lawful amongst Christians, urging a brutifh and unbounded Liberty in all Things. Upon these Principles, not long ago, they raised the rude Multitude in *Germany* against their Magistrates and Princes, causing much Mischief and Blood-shed. And it will never be forgotten what they have since done in

England; murdered the best, the most pious Prince that ever sway'd these Sceptres, or perhaps any others.

It would be very tedious to enumerate all the several Sects, who, every one of them, in one Point or other, do deny the just Rights and Power of the supreme Magistrate, and considered all together, rob him of all the Ensigns of his Power, and leave him not the least Mark of a King but only the Name. How far the Doctrine of the Church of *Rome* is consistent with that Loyalty and Obedience, which, by the Law of Nations, as well as of God, is indispensably due to the higher Powers, supersedes all Endeavours of evincing it: That it establishes the Pope's Supremacy over Kings and Emperors: That 'tis in his Power to excommunicate and depose them; to give away their Kingdoms to others, and absolve their Subjects from their Oaths of Allegiance and Fidelity, together with many other damnable Doctrines and Positions is too notorious

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Having thus shewn and given you a Sketch of the Sectarian and Romish Doctrine in Reference to Obedience, and how seditious and abominable they are, my Advice is, that all Christians would have great Care ~~that~~ they don't split upon either of these dangerous Rocks: And to that End take the Doctrine of the Church of *England* for their Pilot, and steer by Her Practice. For this is to be said in her Praise, that she is (for ought I know) the only Church upon the Face of the Earth, that makes Obedience to the King without base Restrictions or Equivocations, an Article of Her Religion. Into whose Faith, we having been baptiz'd, in the same let us live and die; and then we need not doubt of a blessed Resurrection; from Loyal Subjects to rise Triumphant Kings.

To which State and Condition may God Almighty, by his Grace and Counsel, guide us, for Jesus Christ's Sake, our Mediator and Redeemer, Amen.

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